

Coaching Tip Number 8

This Week's Jumpstart AND Setting Goals

In my work with Olympic athletes, astronauts, top business executives and other winners, I've discovered that most of them have approached their success in ninety-day seasons. In many areas of life, ninety days is regarded as an appropriate growing cycle. The business world operates on a quarterly basis.

The sports world, to a great extent, operates on a seasonal basis in which the majority of league games are played during a ninety-day cycle, not including post season playoffs. The academic world, in many universities, is set up on a quarterly basis, with the fourth quarter usually being summer. Even academic institutions that operate on a semester schedule usually have nine-month terms, or three quarters of the year spent in class.

I've found a ninety-day cycle of success to be a wonderful unit of time. It's a time period that is long enough to plan for, begin, work hard at, and accomplish certain objectives. At the same time, it isn't a year from now or forever. It is a short enough time to generate a sense of urgency. One of the problems with focusing on monthly goals is the gap in a month caused by events and holidays.

Tax time in April, vacations in June, July or August, Christmas and other religious holidays, the World Series, the playoffs, and the Superbowl. These gaps present a problem in any given month. To simply sum up the concept of the ninety-day season of success: It is a long enough period of time to accomplish something significant, yet it is a short enough time that there is urgency to act now.

Your ninety-day season of success will build your motivation because, often, yearly or five-year goals are so distant that it's easy to get discouraged and give up on them in frustration. When your goals are proximate and positively pressing, you're more likely to muster the motivation necessary to achieve them. Before you begin your next ninety-day success season, take an evening to go through the following exercises. To do this, I recommend you download the text from this newsletter, and block out some time for yourself when you're alone and can think without being interrupted.

Exercise One: Review your life forming goals, and update your personal mission statement for your life or career.

Exercise Two: Take fifteen minutes and write down your most important priorities personally and professionally for the next ninety days. Get your calendar and planner out and start sequencing your action steps. Write down a list of "to-dos", phone calls, e-mails and appointments you need to make.

Exercise Three: Now review your list from Exercise Two and spend another fifteen minutes adding things to that list that you want to do for your own personal entertainment or enlightenment.

Exercise Four: Take five minutes and record three things that tend to slip through the cracks in your professional life; then do the same exercise for your personal life. These are things that you always mean to accomplish, but somehow never get around to doing.

Exercise Five: Create your "Seasonal Success Focus." Review the specific goals and images of achievement you want to accomplish during the next ninety days in order to further your life's mission. As you write these goals on paper or in your electronic diary, put a short statement as to the major benefit of accomplishing these goals.

Once you have done this review, determine what the present reality is. Where are you right now in relation to the accomplishment of these goals.

This week, start thinking about your goals as "quarterly quotas."